



Iowa Outdoors

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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Dec. 7, 2004

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SHOTGUN DEER OPENER FOLLOW-UP

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

With daylight fading, we could just make out a line of orange in the field ahead of us. Three hunters were carting back Sunday's last deer to the narrow road, on the west end of the Hawkeye Wildlife Area.

Department of Natural Resources conservation officer Shawn Meier stepped down from his truck and approached their partners, who had arrived ahead of them. Licenses and deer tags were checked and returned. Guns were unloaded and cased. The small doe was set into the bed of a pickup, atop the four others deer already there. This group was done for the weekend.

The 10 hunters had seen plenty of deer, besides the five in the truck. They would decide later whether to go out in the final couple days of Iowa's first shotgun season. As Meier and officer Erika Anderson patrolled Johnson and Cedar counties on Sunday, they heard and saw pretty much the same thing. "I talked with 42 hunters and saw 13 deer," recalls Meier. Most of the groups had already taken deer on Saturday, too. "Most intend to hunt bucks the first day, or over the weekend," offers Meier. "As a last resort, or when they hunt the last day or two, they'll take does. Some did say they'd take a doe rather than shooting at a small buck."

That's an encouraging sign. The DNR is asking hunters to increase their doe harvest to reduce deer numbers. As an incentive, 84,000 *antlerless* tags were allotted county-by-county for hunters in all seasons, in addition to regular *any sex*, statewide

permits. The DNR expects hunters (through all seasons; youth, bow, muzzleloader, shotgun and special late) to eclipse last year's record harvest of nearly 186,000 whitetails.

Austin Allen of Cedar Rapids had one of the county tags, as he hunted with friends near West Branch. "We've seen plenty of does. A few nice bucks," noted Allen. Their group had taken a couple nice bucks by mid-afternoon Sunday. But that extra tag in his pocket came in handy. "We used my antlerless tag; wanted some extra meat. Also, we want to help manage the herd. We like to trophy hunt and we thought that might help out."

By taking a doe, Allen and tens of thousands of other hunters reduce the population not just by one, but by the fawn or fawns each would have borne this spring. And by passing on a small-antlered buck for that doe, the buck will have another year for his antlers to approach trophy size. "I'm surprised. A lot of the hunters say they're not seeing the does they saw in past years; that there were more bucks," offers Meier. "We might be making headway in getting deer numbers down."

For some reason, Sunday seemed pretty laid back, for Meier, anyway. "This is the first year I haven't had any verbal 'scuffles' with someone," he acknowledged. He wrote two tickets Saturday; none Sunday. "I didn't see any stress. Maybe it was the nice weather. Maybe it was because we didn't check anyone in the middle of a busy drive. Maybe everybody was getting a deer."

That's not to say *everybody* was toeing the line. Saturday, I rode with officers in Benton and Linn counties, where a few hunters kept them—and their ticket books—busy. Telltale two-way radio traffic led officers to one group, using it to track a wounded deer. One of them was also holding a landowner tag. It just wasn't on his property. He had company, too, in the next timber. Three of the four hunters checked by officers came away with fines to pay, including one with two landowner tags, sitting comfortably in a blind—but nowhere near his property.

"We saw hundreds of hunters on Sunday, though," reports officer Aric Sloterdijk, who was working the area with six other officers. "Lots of deer, too."

With a colder forecast in sight, Iowa's second round, the late shotgun season, kicks off *this* Saturday.

Parting Notes....

Radio Silence...Not. Abuse of electronics is growing among hunters. "We confiscate scores of 'two-ways' every season," pointed out officer Scott Kinseth, after two hunters were relieved of their expensive walkie-talkies Saturday. "Most hunters pose no problems," emphasizes Kinseth. "But there are a growing number who ignore the 'fair chase' concept. It is illegal and unethical...and there are safety concerns."

Through the weekend, we would occasionally hear 'skips' of conversation; 'We got some coming up behind you', 'Kill shot! Kill shot!' 'I got three more standing right

here that I can shoot right now.’ hollered one weekend commando in Benton County. Sound familiar? Good. Because your friends aren’t the only ones listening. For the record, refer to page 6 in your deer regulations booklet; *‘It is illegal to use one-or two-way radios (including cell phones) to communicate the location or direction of game or furbearing animals or to coordinate the movement of other hunters.’*

Tagged Out. A late season hunter can still buy a ‘regular’ statewide deer tag. However, after the first season opening weekend, tags in 58 of Iowa’s 99 counties--including Johnson, Linn and Cedar counties—were gone. Washington County still had more than 600 available early in the week. Iowa, Keokuk and Muscatine counties had some, too. Go to www.iowadnr.com to check look for counties with antlerless tags remaining.

Thanks For the Warning. By the way, thanks to the concerned Benton County woman who tipped off a couple guys in hunting pants and blaze orange jackets, Saturday morning. “You guys legal?” she asked. “There’s DNR officers out here everywhere!” Well, not *everywhere*. Just the four back in the woods a half-mile...and the three she to whom she was talking. Apparently, she didn’t notice the uniforms under the blaze orange. Officer Pat Jorgensen assured her that they were clean. “Seeing many deer today?” she queried? “No. Just all the DNR officers,” he honestly replied.

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LOOKING FOR LAST MINUTE HOLIDAY GIFT IDEAS?

Still looking for that special gift for that certain someone who loves the outdoors? Want to avoid the hassles of holiday shopping? How about “A Gift of Iowa’s Nature” from the State Forest Nursery this holiday season?

The Iowa Department of Natural Resources forestry bureau has native tree and shrub gift packets available for the holiday season. The packet is an effort to promote and encourage planting native trees and shrubs for songbird and wildlife habitat. State foresters, environmental and outdoor organizations have designed five packets of native trees and shrubs seedlings for this holiday season with delivery in the spring. The recipients receive a unique certificate for the holiday.

The native tree and shrub packets available are:

Songbird Packet: 20 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$20. Perfect for a larger backyard habitat project. This packet includes 2 bur oaks, 2 white pines, 4 wild plum, 4 chokecherry, 4 gray dogwoods and 4 serviceberry and is recommended by Audubon Iowa.

Wildlife Packet: 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet is great for small acreage owners who have one half to 1-acre to plant and includes 50 white pine, 50 bur oak, 50 gray dogwoods and 50 highbush cranberry.

Turkey Packet: 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet provides mast trees for one half to 1-acre planting and includes 50 bur oak, 50 white oak, 50 pin oak and 50 gray dogwoods. The packet is recommended by the Iowa Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Pheasant Packet: 200 trees (8 to 24 inches tall) for \$90. This packet provides food and winter cover and includes 50 redcedar, 50 wild plums, 50 ninebark and 50 gray dogwoods. The packet is recommended by the Iowa chapters of Pheasants Forever.

Quail Packet: 200 trees (8'-24" tall) for \$90. This Quail packet provides food and winter cover and includes 100 wild plum and 100 gray dogwood and is recommended by DNR Wildlife Biologists

Orders are accepted by phone, e-mail or regular mail and there is still time to receive the gift certificate in time for the holidays, but orders must be placed by Dec. 20.

These packets are also available to purchase for yourself. The trees and shrubs will be delivered around the end of March to the end of April. To order or for more information about the packets and gift certificate, call the State Forest Nursery directly at 1-800-865-2477, Fax at 515-233-1131 or go on line to www.iowadnr.com/forestry/

If you have special people or friends that live in a different climate, check out the State Forestry agency home pages at www.stateforesters.org for state and private nursery facilities in their state that may offer similar tree and shrub packets as gifts.

If you need more information about tree planting programs and assistance in Iowa check out www.iowatreeplanting.com

Please support our efforts to expand songbird and wildlife habitat for today and for tomorrow by giving a gift of Iowa's nature.

For more information, contact John Walkowiak, chief of the DNR's forestry bureau, at 515-242-5966.

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Non-game Wildlife Needs Your Support

PLEASE REMEMBER THE FISH/WILDLIFE TAX CHECKOFF

Research and habitat management for game species such as deer, turkeys, waterfowl and pheasants are funded through license fees, habitat stamps and income taxes. The Iowa Department of Natural Resources wildlife diversity program represents the more than 80 percent of Iowa's wildlife that is not hunted. Historically this program has had no stable source of funding and relies mainly on contributions from the public.

To make a contribution to the wildlife diversity program and invest in the future of Iowa's nongame wildlife, remember to give to the Fish/Wildlife Fund (*Chickadee Checkoff*) on your state income tax form. Your contribution will be used to conduct research and provide habitat management for Iowa's nongame species and promote education and enjoyment of those species to the public.

In recent years, contributions to the nongame program were used to conduct research and surveys on Iowa's frogs and toads, wintering bald eagles, heron rookeries, bats, and Iowa's raptors. Public events such as bald eagle appreciation days, Pelican Fest, and Hawk Watch, which attracted nearly 20,000 people, were also funded through donations. Several publications on the appreciation of Iowa's diverse wildlife and management of it were distributed to thousands of people. With respect to Iowa's wildlife diversity, currently many are the beneficiary of contributions by few.

Research of the Fish/Wildlife Fund (*Chickadee Checkoff*) shows an average \$11.50 contribution from a mere 1% (approx.) of the population filing income tax. This manner of funding does not match the level of management needed across Iowa. With 45 percent of Iowa's population over age 16 engaging in wildlife watching activities, there is much funding potential to realize.

Please remember to tell your tax preparer that you would like to contribute to the Fish/Wildlife Fund (*Chickadee Checkoff*). By donating a few dollars, you will be helping in the conservation of 500-plus nongame animals. Invest in Iowa's natural beauty by supporting its wildlife diversity. For more information please contact the Wildlife Diversity Program 515-432-2823. Doug.Harr@dnr.state.ia.us

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NATURAL RESOURCE COMMISSION TO MEET THURSDAY

DES MOINES - The Natural Resource Commission (NRC) of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will meet at 8:30 a.m., Thursday, Dec. 9, in the fourth floor conference room, Wallace State Office Bldg., in Des Moines. The meeting is open to the public.

Members of the NRC are Joan Schneider, Randy Duncan, Paul Christiansen, Carol Kramer, William Sullivan, Richard Francisco and Janice Marcantonio. The DNR Director is Jeffrey Vonk.

The following is the agenda for the December meeting.

- Approve Agenda
- Approve Minutes of November Meeting
- Director's Remarks
- Construction Projects
- Land Acquisition
 - East Fork Des Moines River, Humboldt County – Fisher
 - Benton County – Rahn Donation
 - Lost Grove Lake / MidAmerican Energy Company, Scott County
 - Little Wapsipinicon River, Howard County - Hart
- Conservation and Recreation Donations
- Boat Donation – Iowa Great Lakes
- Timber Sales
 - Shimek State Forest, Lick Creek Unit
 - Shimek State Forest, Keosauqua Unit
 - Loess Hills State Forest, Rice Tract
- East Fork Grand River Supplemental Plan (Gooseberry Lake)
- Appeal of Proposed Decision – David J. Vroman (Tabled)
- Meeting Dates and Locations
- Ducks Unlimited/DNR Cooperative Agreement
- Project AWARE Update
- Springbrook Youth Deer Hunt Update
- General Discussion
- Items for Next Meeting, Feb. 10, 2005 in Des Moines

For more information, contact Karyn Stone at 515-281-8650.

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